

Claims

- [c1] 1. A system for fulfilling services orders onboard a transport vehicle, the system comprising:
- (a) a plurality of computers that include an onboard computer transported with the vehicle, and an external computer not transported with the vehicle;
 - (b) software installed on the onboard computer, the onboard computer software being operable on the onboard computer for causing the onboard computer to perform tasks including:
 - i) obtaining service information from the external computer via communication with the external vehicle computer if a communication pathway to the external vehicle computer is open; and
 - ii) providing access to service information by vehicle personnel for fulfillment of the service orders; and
 - (c) software installed on the external computer, the external computer software being operable on the external vehicle computer for causing the external computer to perform tasks including:
 - i) acquiring information to determine the available services provided on the transport vehicle; and
 - ii) managing the delivery of services to the transport vehicle; and
 - iii) making service information obtainable by the onboard computer.
- [c2] 2. The system of Claim 1, wherein at least some service orders include requests for delivery of products to passengers, and the onboard computer software includes logic routines adapted for managing delivery of products in accordance with service orders, and billing of passengers for fulfillment of service orders.
- [c3] 3. The system of Claim 2, wherein the logic routines associate a seat location with each service order.
- [c4] 4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the external computer software is further operable on the external computer for accepting service orders prior to boarding and associates each service order with a vehicle departure and makes the information obtainable by the onboard computer.
- [c5] 5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the external computer software is further operable on the external computer for analyzing at least one of historical

service order information and currently entered service order information, and based on the analysis recommends vehicle inventory, and associates each current service order with a vehicle departure and makes the information obtainable by the onboard computer.

[c6] 6. The system of Claim 1, wherein at least some of the service orders include requests for delivery of products and the external computer software further comprises software logic operable for managing flow of inventory from the terminal to the vehicle and from other sources to the terminal.

[c7] 7. A system for fulfilling service orders on a transport vehicle, the system comprising an onboard computer transported with the vehicle and connections with electronic devices operated by vehicle personnel or passengers, the onboard computer including software, which when operated on the onboard computer and electronic devices causes the onboard computer to perform tasks comprising accepting service orders entered via the electronic devices by vehicle personnel or passengers and making the service orders accessible to vehicle personnel.

[c8] 8. The system of Claim 7, wherein the electronic devices include passenger supplied personal information processing apparatus carried on by passengers.

[c9] 9. The system of Claim 8, wherein the connections comprise wireless communication between the electronic devices and the onboard computer.

[c10] 10. The system of Claim 7, wherein the electronic devices include handheld computers used by vehicle personnel for creating and accessing service orders on the onboard computer by communication between the handheld computers and the onboard computer.

[c11] 11. The system of Claim 10, wherein the communication between the handheld computers and the onboard computer comprises wireless communication.

[c12] 12. The system of Claim 7, wherein the handheld or onboard computers include hardware and software enabling reading of cards for facilitation of onboard cash-less transactions.

- [c13] 13. The system of Claim 8, further comprising an external computer not transported with the vehicle, the external computer including software being operable on the external computer for causing the external computer to perform tasks comprising:
- a) accepting service orders for passengers via communication with other computers through which service orders are entered;
 - b) making accepted service orders obtainable by the onboard computer, wherein the onboard computer software is operable for obtaining passenger service orders from the external computer if a communication route to the external computer is open; and
 - c) validating credit transactions communicated by the onboard computer if a communication route to the onboard computer is open.
- [c14] 14. The system of Claim 13, wherein the external computer software is further operable on the external computer for accepting service orders prior to passenger boarding, and associates each service order with a flight and makes the information obtainable by the onboard computer.
- [c15] 15. The system of Claim 13, wherein if a service order includes a request for Internet access, the onboard computer provides Internet access to a connection at a passenger seat location corresponding to the service order, by making use of said communication route.
- [c16] 16. A system for fulfilling service orders on a transport vehicle, the system comprising an external computer not transported with the vehicle, the external computer including software being operable on the external computer for causing the external computer to perform tasks comprising:
- a) accessing database information pertaining to vehicle departure, destination, past services orders, and inventory information; and
 - b) based on the database information, estimating service orders expected to be received and recommending inventory for transport with the vehicle for onboard fulfillment of service orders.
- [c17] 17. The system of Claim 16, wherein the external computer accepts service orders via communication with other computers through which service orders are entered.
- [c18] 18. The system of Claim 17, wherein the other computers include kiosks at

terminal areas.

- [c19] 19. The system of Claim 17, wherein the other computers include computers connected to the Internet.
- [c20] 20. The system of Claim 17, wherein the external computer software is further operable on the external computer for analyzing currently accepted service orders prior to boarding to determine needed inventory for onboard service order fulfillment and associates each service order with a vehicle departure and makes the information obtainable by the onboard computer.
- [c21] 21. The system of Claim 16, wherein the external computer software is further operable on the external computer for recommending based on the database information, inventory for terminal storage for replenishing onboard inventory.
- [c22] 22. The system of Claim 16, further comprising an onboard computer, including software installed on the onboard computer, the onboard computer software being operable on the onboard computer for causing the onboard computer to perform tasks including:
- a) obtaining service information from the external computer via communication with the external vehicle computer if a communication pathway to the external vehicle computer is open; and
 - b) providing access to service information by vehicle personnel for fulfillment thereof.
- [c23] 23. The system of Claim 16, wherein at least some of the service orders include requests for delivery of products and the external computer software further comprising software logic operable for managing flow of inventory from the terminal to the vehicle and from other sources to the terminal.
- [c24] 24. The system of claim 22 wherein the onboard computer software further comprises routines used to manage product flow on the vehicle and residual product flow off the vehicle